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# **Crisis Management... Who Is In Charge?**

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## ABSTRACT

The 1993 election of Bill Clinton brought to the office of the President a team of professionals, many very young, who had not held key leadership positions in the Executive Department for at least the last twelve years. Is the new President, or his staff, trained in CRISIS MANAGEMENT? Just who is in charge at the point of the transition of Presidential power?

Remarkably, the smooth transition, in spite of crisis, from one President to another, regardless of party affiliation, is one of the lasting strengths of the United States. However, the elements of regional conflict and instant destruction by terrorist attack, for example, pose potential immediate concerns for a new President, especially a President (and Party) not immediately familiar with current Federal government functions.

This report asserts crisis management of the first major crisis, faced by a new President, develops the blueprint for addressing any future crisis throughout the life of the administration. In addition, examining those transitions where a new President is also from a non-incumbent party provides a particularly useful cookbook of do's and don'ts for future transitions. Without the benefit of party regulars already in government, a non-incumbent administration must quickly develop its own method of crisis management. Analysis, greater familiarity and understanding of the problems facing Presidential transitions, and addressing these issues, could reduce the potential errors in strategic decision making, ultimately *improving future presidential transitions*.

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***"Great crises produce great men and great deeds of courage."***

John F. Kennedy  
*Profiles in Courage*, 1956

## **Introduction**

We had been standing in a crowd for over two hours hoping to catch a glimpse of the new President. For a January day in Washington D.C., it could not have been more beautiful. I was freezing, but my son did not seem to mind. He had never seen a President take the oath of office. And however long it took, he was going to see the President. Just when all feeling left my toes, we caught sight of a cavalcade of cars approaching the Capital. "There he is, there he is," my son cried out. Several large limousines sped by, followed by what appeared to be a four wheel drive vehicle. Puzzled by its sudden appearance, my son asked, "What's *that* truck for?" I explained that although the truck was not as fancy as the rest of the cars, it was equally as important...it carried information to launch our nuclear force.

But my son's innocent inquiry raises significant issues. Assuming the awesome power of the United States Chief Executive, the new President also grasps the responsibility to lead this nation in a crisis. However, the Constitution requires no experience. Launch codes, and control of mass weapons of destruction, represent just some of the areas the new President must learn. Transition is swift and quick. The 1993 election of Bill Clinton brought to the office a team of professionals, many very young, who had not held key leadership positions in the Executive Department for at least the last twelve years. Is the new President, or his staff, trained in CRISIS MANAGEMENT? Just who is in charge at the point of the transition of Presidential power?

In Chinese, the character representing "crisis" has a double meaning: **threat**, and **opportunity**. This is a revealing description of just what a "crisis" involves. In addressing a "crisis", a new President must quickly assess **threats**, create **opportunity**, and act in the best interests of the country. Remarkably, the smooth transition, in spite of crisis, from one President to another, regardless of party affiliation, is one of the major strengths of the United States. However, the elements of regional conflict and instant destruction by terrorist attack, for example, pose potential immediate concerns for a new President...especially a President (and Party) not immediately familiar with current Federal government functions.

*I contend that the crisis management of the first major crisis faced by a new President develops the blueprint for addressing any future crisis throughout the life of the administration. In addition, examining those transitions of a new President and from a non-incumbant party, provides a particularly useful cookbook of do's and don'ts for future transitions. A new administration must quickly develop its own method of crisis management. Analysis of, and greater familiarity and understanding with, the problems facing Presidential transitions, and addressing these issues, could reduce the potential errors in strategic decision-making, thereby improving future presidential transitions.*

## Discussion

*"Nothing gives one person so much advantage over another as to remain always cool and unruffled under all circumstances." Thomas Jefferson*

In combat, a fighter pilot knows that his statistical chance of survival goes up if he can get through the *first 10 missions*. To give our pilots *the advantage of the first 10*

*missions*, both the U.S. Air Force (RED FLAG) and Navy (TOPGUN) programs provide realistic training to U.S. pilots in order that they can better "survive" the *first* real crisis they face. Do we adequately provide similar crisis training for our Commander-in-Chief? What training does he, and/or his staffs, obtain before assuming office? Additionally, a new President faces inadequacies as a result of limited access to up-to-date knowledge on the full spectra of national options for crisis response. Further, a new President, from an opposition party, exacerbates the lack of information issue. Not only are the President and his staff new, but they lack access to the national machinery controlled by an opposition party. Therefore, the first real national, or international crisis, faced by the new president, serves to test and mold the new administration, and unfortunately, also serves as his *training*. Three transitions: **Eisenhower -- Kennedy; Johnson -- Nixon, and Carter -- Reagan**, offer a unique look at Presidential transition, not only because a new person assumed the Presidency, but the election also installed a new party in the White House. The new Presidents brought new people to fill the Executive Department. The new teams faced challenging world crises, and the responses, of the potentially inexperienced people, had global consequences.

With the simple statement by the new President,...*"so help me God"*...,he grabs the reins of the most powerful nation on earth. Very quickly, the new President and his staff must be able to deal effectively with various crises, or face international disaster. In addition, the reaction of a new President to crisis sets a tone for further action within his term. The character and style of the individual President is determined in the first major "crisis", whether it be a success or failure. How the new President and his staff prepare to meet these first challenges molds the character of the new administration.

Assessing crisis management during the transition from one presidential administration to the next requires :

- **A review of Crisis Management:** A look at **What** it is and **How** a President needs to consider managing a crisis.
- **Examining Historical Perspectives:** Review of the origins of the National Security Council and its crisis management function . This report includes an examination of three past transitions: **Eisenhower - Kennedy, Johnson - Nixon, and Carter - Reagan**. Questions to be answered include: How new staffs reorganized to meet crisis decisions, and lessons learned as a result of the first major crisis of the new administrations?
- **What is History Teaching Us:** A critical review of the three transitions examined, asking: What overall lessons are applicable to future transitions?
- Finally, what **Recommendations** can be derived to improve the President's capabilities to crisis manage?

## **Crisis Management**

### **What's Crisis Management?**

*"National strategy implies something different from, but more inclusive than, military strategy. It implies the coordinated application of all the various means we have available, economic, diplomatic and psychological, as well as military, in pursuit of our objectives as a nation."...*

Paul H. Nitze (GG)

The National Strategy determines basic long term goals and objectives; defines courses of action, and defines the allocation of resources necessary to carry out the goals and objectives of the nation. It includes plans for achieving the goals and is the pattern the new administration relies on to administer decisions. (JJ. p.5) Critical to the application of



a National Strategy are strategic decisions. Strategic decisions have several key features. First, strategic decisions are not routine. Each one is unique and not easily committed to simple decisive rules. Second, strategic decisions are critically important to the interests of the Nation. They potentially involve, for example, the commitment of resources and jeopardizing national sovereignty. Finally, strategic decisions are complex and require the consideration of broad areas of national and international interests and values. I mention this brief anatomy of a strategic decision because strategic decisions *are* the decisions in a crisis. Presumably, the election of a new President, from an opposition party, is the result of a majority of Americans reacting in favor to the new President's interests and policies, over the old. Therefore, immediately upon assuming office, it's the new President's national strategy and policies that form the basis for strategic decisions. These strategic decisions define a new and different set of parameters for handling *crises*, and result in the administrations own *management* style; often leading to reorganizations to meet the next unexpected event. (JJ. p.6)

Webster defines a *crisis* as "the turning point...the decisive moment; a time of difficulty or danger," and *management* as "the act of directing; controlling; coping with." A nation confronted with a crisis has three general strategies to choose from: capitulation, war, or crisis management. Williams, in *Crisis Management*, relates "*crisis management is concerned on the one hand with procedures for controlling and regulating a crisis so that it does not get out of hand and lead to war, and on the other hand with ensuring that the crisis is resolved on a satisfactory basis in which the vital interests of the state are secured and protected.*" (BB. p.13) As outlined by Williams, two primary elements are key to defining crisis management: first, the application (*strategic decisions*) of control by the national leadership to prevent war. Secondly, to advance the national strategy, protecting interests and settling the crisis so it does not lead to a further crisis. But the

key, to both elements, is recognizing a crisis is at hand. If you don't see the crisis coming, control and strategy are difficult to establish. The central issue is balance between our national strategy, with its interests and objectives, and actions taken to prevent war. (BB. p.13)

Another issue for consideration is found within the framework of the Constitution. Specifically, the President and the Congress share responsibilities for the nation's security. The Preamble insures both will "provide for the common defense," and Article I and II specify specific authorities, duties, and rights to enforce their joint responsibilities. In spite of separate, competing powers and differing points of view, the constitutional checks and balances between both branches crafts balance in the nation's response to national security matters. As described by Edward S. Corwin's in his paper on foreign policy, the "Constitution...is an invitation to struggle for the privilege of directing American national security policy." (M. p.67)

Complicating the new President's struggle for power, and relationship with Congress (and often depending on previous training and/or experiences), is the use of armed force to crisis manage. The approach is often characterized in two ways, neither of which prepares them well for enduring problems in the conduct of a crisis. On one hand, new Presidents view the military instrument almost entirely as a manipulable tool for *signaling* in a context of crisis management. However, the statecraft for waging an acute crisis is distinct from, but obviously related to, the strategy of war. Crisis management that fails to arrest a slide to war may leave military assets awkwardly deployed for trial by combat. On the other hand, a new administration is prone to treat war as a "black box," mysterious in its inner workings, yet a potential problem-solver regardless of the consequences to national strategy and possible international escalation. (I. p.128) I bring

this up because learning how to use the military in crisis management requires attention before a crisis, and not learned about as an afterthought. Unlike the economic and political aspects of strategic decision-making in a crisis, the ultimate failure to grasp the military dimension can result in loss of lives. In spite of the shared responsibilities, the President is at the very center of defending national security. The President is responsible for developing a crisis management system. From Thomas Jefferson's, *"The transaction of business with foreign nations is executive altogether,"* to Woodrow Wilson's, *"the initiative in foreign affairs, which the President possesses without any restriction whatever, is virtually the power to control them absolutely,"* to Harry S. Truman's, *"I make foreign policy,"* to today, it is the President the people turn to in time of crisis for leadership. Additionally, a national crisis usually results in broad powers for the President. The "emergency" powers assumed by Presidents are debated in Congress and in the courts. But regardless of the routine debate of how much power should rest with the Executive department, all agree that during a "crisis," the body politic turn to the President to "save" the Nation. (N. p.81-4)

With the President as the primary player in national "crisis management," it's the President who develops the crisis management system. Therefore, a new administration must quickly address anticipated threats, and set up procedures designed to reduce and diffuse potential problems. Central to defining the crisis response architecture for the new President is the ability to maintain control over events during the crisis. The national leadership fears losing control of the events and people involved in the crisis, resulting in a crisis with a momentum of its own. (BB. p.13)

Therefore, the initial reaction, to a major crisis by a new administration, requires some mechanism for crisis management at the executive level. It must include an

understanding of strategic decisions, include the new presidents elected vision, account for the ultimate consequences of military action, and fit into the framework of congressional expectations. All this has to happen immediately after..."so help me God." Foreign policy crises are recurring and exceedingly dangerous. While crisis management is not a cure-all, it's worthy of examination because there are various skills and methods to use before and after a crisis...reducing the likelihood that crises will lead to a break down in national security.

### Crisis Management and the President

"One of the lessons which have most clearly come from the costly and dangerous experience of the war (talking about WW II) is that there must be unified direction...we did not have it when we were attacked...and we certainly paid a high price for not having it"

Harry S. Truman

Crisis management has become a frequent style used in global politics. The average number of crises is rising in this country when compared with the last century. For example, the frequency of crisis confrontation rose more than fourfold between 1960 and 1976, with an average of 18.2 military conflicts under way each year. These conflicts threatened to engage the major world leaders in direct confrontation. In affect, since World War II, we are in an "age of crisis." (N. p.82)

Often times, we take the view all out war is not a possibility. In fact, since the World War I, 83 percent of all crises involved the use of force (N. p.83). However, crises with the use of force among the major powers actually declined in this period (N. p.83). But as the sole super power, particularly during the present period of transition to the "new world order," crises can be expected as an infectious feature of international politics. This being the case, we must become more conscious of what is conflict, steps to resolve conflict, and crisis techniques to manage the process.

A new President confronts serious problems in attempting to maintain control in his first crisis. Bouchard, in *Command in Crisis*, describes four risks that could lead to loss of control during a crisis: *"military action being driven (or misused) by its own logic and momentum, national leaders losing momentum over their military commanders, lack of military options other than escalatory war plans, and impairment of rational calculation by psychological factors under the stress of a crisis."* (BB. p.13)<sup>1</sup> To regain control, a President needs 20/20 forward vision...what's the next crisis? What crisis is developing?

How crisis management develops requires a review which Fink describes in *Crisis Management*, as the "Anatomy of a crisis." Fink describes (see Figure 1) four phases of a crisis : Prodromal Crisis Stage; Acute Crisis Stage; Chronic Crisis Stage and Crisis Resolution Stage. Not all crises have all the phases, but dissecting a crisis is useful in this analysis for formulating an overall management strategy.

**The Prodromal Crisis Stage:** The warning stage, if there is any. In many instances this is a turning point. If the turning point, the prodrome, is entirely missed, then crisis management becomes an after the fact exercise or damage control. It is much easier managing the crisis at this point before it erupts into a situation out of control. Early warning and recognition is vitally important at this stage. Just knowing or having a sense of what is to happen will help preparing for the next phase.

**The Acute Crisis Stage:** The point of no return; some damage has been done; and how much additional damage occurs depends on the leader's crisis management ability and plan...for a national crisis – the President.

**The Chronic Crisis Stage:** This is the clean up phase, or post mortem. A period of second guessing, self analysis and recovery. The skillful leader analyzes what went right and wrong and takes appropriate action.

**The Crisis Resolution Stage:** The final stage...when all is well again.

Figure 1 (DD. p.20-25)

In managing a crisis, having a visible plan, crafted by the President, rather than a random reaction to events, provides the Presidential team the strategy and direction the President wants to take towards achieving national strategic objectives. Essentially, the

<sup>1</sup>Bouchard borrows this from Glenn Snyder's *"Crisis Bargaining."* p. 244-45

President manages decisions. The more adept as a decision-maker, with an ability to capture opportunity where others often detour, the more chance for successful crisis resolution in the nation's interest. (DD. p.84)

Certainly, past Presidential transitions, and the ability of the new President to deal with the first crisis on his watch, offers some insightful perspectives on crisis management techniques.

### **Historical perspective**

#### **The U.S.Crisis Machinery - Development**

The legislation in 1947 created the National Security Council (NSC). Truman's experiences at the end of World War II, convinced him "Our Armed forces must be united." Although Truman felt unification of the military was of practical necessity, he did not strongly favor any particular plan. (T. p.140) Trying to achieve legislation was an exhausting task for Truman. The bill passed (July 25, 1947) did not in fact create Truman's Department of Defense, but provided a Secretary presiding over a nebulous body called the National Military Establishment. Finally, new legislation, passed in 1949, ultimately created the Department of Defense proposed by Truman. (T. p.310)<sup>2</sup>

Today, the National Security Council (NSC) is Chaired by the President and has three statutory members: the Vice President, Secretary of Defense, and Secretary of State. In addition, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) are statutory advisors. Whenever a new crisis breaks in Washington, this community, within the government, provides the structure to manage the

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<sup>2</sup>See NOTE 1 at end of Text.

crisis. An experienced administration keeps the machinery well lubricated and lightly mothballed capable of activation at moments notice. But a *new* administration often brings a variety of its own internal problems. Disorganization, disloyalty, and inexperience often grind the machinery to a halt. Therefore, a clear understanding of the NSC, and its relative importance to Presidential crisis response, is critical. The NSC, at the White House, provides the forum for bringing all parts of the government together to coordinate the formulation of the President's policies, and the effective execution of his decisions.

The gears of the machinery have different designs. Our system of government revolves around two groups of public servants. One group - the administration - consists of the President, Vice President and Cabinet officers and advisors, elected or appointed from outside the government. They are responsible for setting and managing policy direction (or turn on and guide the machine). At the time of transition, a new driver (team) is at the wheel. Often, the new team's agenda is "we are going to do things differently...regardless if the present system works well." But the machinery has its own inner workings.

The cog (at the center of the inner workings) is the cadre of career officers whose profession is the management of the complex workings of the federal bureaucracy. To the new administration team they say, "I'm your experience, it's not broke, Mr. President, don't break it." This group interacts within their Departments, but it is in the NSC, when working properly, where both the government professional and administration players entwine, providing a meeting ground for continuing conversation. (E. p.63)

The President provides the direction the Nation is to take, presumably rooted in a "mandate" from the people (which often means to the new administration *everything must*

*change*). This mandate often carries the baggage of reorganization, mistrust for the "embedded government bureaucrats," and inexperience. However, the government professionals provide the President with opportunities and constraints imposed by the real world, and their sense of how to get things done within the government. But to the new administration, this is also a liability...resistant to change and perceived disloyalty to the new President. In reality, each player needs the other to function, and this is the beauty of our government. The trick is making the machine work well in and out of crisis.

It is easy to see how a "new administration" could quickly come to the belief that "the bureaucracy" needs changing. They fear bureaucrats are not telling them why they cannot do what they want to do, or even frustrating them by not wholeheartedly carrying out the orders of the new president. In a crisis, the conflict between the "gears" can produce a shut down, and a redesign is the only way to start the engine moving again. Past transitions, and their crisis reactions, offer an insight into this problem.

#### **Eisenhower - Kennedy Transition**

*" the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans..."*  
Inaugural Address of John F. Kennedy

Ted Thorensen, President Kennedy's Press Secretary, recalled the Eisenhower administration established a framework of good feeling, in sharp contrast to the rancor, cool relations, and callous indifference, that marked past transitions. During the transition, the two administrations openly tried ensuring a spirit of unity and cooperation. (Q. p.227)

In spite of this warm beginning, President Kennedy inherited a "crisis" in the making. On March 17, 1960, President Eisenhower authorized a Cuban "program."



Kennedy did not know of Eisenhower's plan to put 700 Cubans ashore on their island to start an insurgency. (W. p.324)

***"Before my inauguration, I asked him, 'Now Mr. President, is there anything really urgent, or anything that can prove embarrassing to us, to the United States, during my administration, at this time, that I should know about?' And he said, 'Well, there is a hit and run raid that has nothing to do with the United States, or the U.S. Forces, that's going to come out of Guatemala. But we have nothing to do with it.' That lying son of a bitch"***

**....John F. Kennedy**

The plan included "a paramilitary force outside of Cuba for future guerrilla action." In the Fall of 1960, the CIA recommended going beyond a guerrilla band and preparing a force for a conventional invasion. An essential part of the plan was United States air cover. (P. p.310)

Three men, held over from the previous administration, presented the invasion plan to the new President. These three men were: Allen Dulles, Director of the CIA; Richard Bissell, Jr., a Deputy Director of the CIA, who was in charge of the Cuban "program," and General Lyman Lemnitzer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. On January 22, 1961, Dulles and Lemnitzer outlined the plan to leading members of the Kennedy Administration. Six days later Kennedy called his first White House meeting on what had become an invasion plan. (W. p.324-5) Relates General Maxwell Taylor, who became Kennedy's military advisor:

***"Bear in mind they were strangers to each other. The President barely knew his own Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense. He didn't know the military or CIA. Here was this vast machinery of government and they didn't know how it ran, where you put in the gas, where you put in the oil, where you turn the throttle. And like all other administrations, they'd gone to great pains to throw out the old rascals so they could let the new rascals get in and bring utopia of some sort."(W. p.325)***

Dean Rusk, the new Secretary of State, recalled not paying particular attention to the details of the plan, anticipating plenty of time to make changes. However, he wondered why this information was not forthcoming during the transition. (Z. p.291) The President was initially "wary and reserved in his reaction" to the invasion plan. (P. p.311)

The Presidents key advisers gave their approval to the invasion plan. At no time was there a full meeting of the National Security Council to analyze and debate the plan. Although the key career advisors argued for support of the plan, the President was reluctant to give the United States air cover, i.e. execute the plan as developed. This set the tone for further group discussions. (P. p.311)

The invasion, executed early in the morning of Monday, April 17, 1961, without air cover, turned into a total disaster. By Wednesday, the Cuban Army captured the remaining elements of the exile brigade. Kennedy blamed "gaps in intelligence plus some errors in ship loading, timing and tactics." (P. p.311)

However, the *Bay of Pigs* fiasco was an invaluable lesson for President Kennedy. It led him to make basic changes in his selection of advisors, his setup of procedures for dealing with decision-making, and his formation of policy. The lessons the President learned aided him in avoiding similar pitfalls and errors during the missile crisis. What Kennedy learned from the crisis, and the adjustments he made to his crisis management gamebook, affected his entire future administration. (P. p.313; Q. p.259-722)

- First, it revealed to the President that he could not give his complete *trust* to the experts.

- In addition, *communications*, within the administration, were mishandled during the Bay of Pigs operation. The basic fault was the dismantling of the National Security Council and the withdrawal of air cover from the plan.
- Further, during the invasion itself, the President's failure to properly follow the scenario negated any efforts to *better pace crisis events*. There was no real opportunity to properly pace the quickly unfolding disaster at the *Bay of Pigs*.
- The President *did not have trusted and well-informed aides maintaining close supervision* of the invasion and crisis scenario. There was little control of the coordination between those who were planning and carrying out the invasion, and those who were making policy decisions.
- The Kennedy administration was "*not yet fully organized*" for crisis management, knew little of those in the CIA who had planned and were now strongly advocating the invasion, and was severely constrained by time and secrecy conditions. The administration never attained the necessary measure of control and supervision of the Bay of Pigs operation.

As a result of his first "crisis," President Kennedy strengthened his administration's process of arriving at a proper strategy, and organizing and operating decision-making groups in a crisis. He learned that in future crises to be more concerned with effective communications, both within the governmental advisory systems and from without. He further came to recognize the importance of effective supervision and coordination of crisis actions. The crisis illustrated to President Kennedy that the President has to "extend" the range of advice, and use a decision-making management style more oriented towards hammering out the best solutions for a variety of options. (Q. p.259-722)

However, these valuable lessons were costly in terms of our Nation's international respect, and the human lives lost. President Kennedy learned crisis management under fire, and frankly, he went into an international "life or death dogfight", and lost. In *Command Decisions and the Presidency: A Study in National Security Policy and Organization*, R. Gordon Hoxie records that, "despite President Eisenhower's emphasis on the vital importance of the National Security Council, President Kennedy rendered the NSC virtually inoperative until after the Bay of Pigs." In a meeting with President Eisenhower on April 22, 1961, after the crisis, President Kennedy assured the former President and soldier that, "hereafter, if we get into anything like this again, it is going to be a success." (P. p.316)

Did the lessons, and changes made as a result of the *Bay of Pigs* incident, stick? In October 1962, the Cuban Missile Crisis erupted. This time the President averted war, and his handling of the crisis demonstrated a "turning point in American civil-military relations and in the evolution of U.S. command and control doctrine." (BB. p.134) Vice Admiral Houser (Naval Assistant to the Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell during the Crisis) notes, "During World War II and the Korean War there was military command only, no control. But after Cuba, civilians would exercise both command and control." (BB. p.134) Apparently, the die was re-cast after the *Bay of Pigs*, and the Kennedy administration's crisis response focused on crisis resolution with early prevention.

### Johnson - Nixon Transition

"I've always thought this country could run itself domestically without a President; all you need is a competent Cabinet to run the country at home... the President makes foreign policy."

Richard M. Nixon

Richard Nixon entered the Presidency in 1969 with a commitment to reduce the size and the influence of the White House staff (this characteristic flourished during the Johnson administration). He did this for two primary reasons. First, it was a politically advantageous strategy to promise the electorate that decisions would be broad-based. The White House staff would not dominate policy making without regard to departmental recommendations on implementation problems and legislative concerns. Second, Nixon sought to focus his attention on international issues, and leave domestic issues for the Cabinet to resolve (see initial Nixon quote). *Cabinet Government* afforded Nixon the opportunity to direct his efforts at solving a myriad of foreign affairs issues, primarily resolving the Vietnam War. (JJ.)

Henry Kissinger recalled *"It was President Johnson's tragedy that he became identified with a national misadventure that was already long in the making by the time he took office and in the field of foreign policy for which his finely tuned political antennae proved worthless. President Johnson did not take naturally to international relations. One never had the impression that he would think about the topic spontaneously-while shaving, for example. He did not trust his own judgment; he therefore relied on advisers, most of whom he had not appointed, and whose way of thinking was not really congenial to him. Many of these advisers were themselves without bearings amidst the upheaval of the 1960s."* (S. p.17-19)

The *Pueblo* Crisis of 1968 highlights the tragedy of this transition. The Vietnam War constantly distracted President Johnson. The Tet Offensive, one of the largest battles ever fought by American forces, began eight days after the *Pueblo* seizure. The heavy casualties of Tet shocked Americans who believed the Vietnam War was close to over. Opposition to the war escalated with street demonstrations and riots. President Johnson

lost the New Hampshire primary and stepped out of the race. Our quadrennial nominating process began. Then came the riots at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago and the close, hard-fought, election. The Naval Court of Inquiry began its deliberations on Richard Nixon's inaugural day, a more newsworthy event than the *Pueblo* seizure. (R. p.248-250)

What happened to the *Pueblo*? It was a full two hours before President Johnson received word of the seizure. As recalled by Arthur J. McCafferty, a White House aide: *"He (Johnson) was concerned about the safety of the men, and was mad as hell. One time he asked me, 'Why wasn't I called immediately?' ...And the only answer I could tell him was, 'Mr. President, we could have called you and said, 'Sir, here's what we have. But please don't ask questions. We just don't know the answers.' "* (R. p.248-250)

The irony is the President's National Security Council should have known what was going on. The cloak and dagger National Security Agency knew what was going on, but a break down in communications with the White House kept the President in the dark. This break down had a profound impact on the new Nixon Administration.

Watching this debacle was the Nixon team. From the beginning, President Nixon planned a transition image that conveyed competency and a rational ability to make government work. He made reorganizations within the Executive Department to insure that, "Presidential programs are carefully coordinated, and the information system keeps him adequately informed." Before the NSC staff returned to their offices after his Inauguration, 20 January, 1969, Nixon signed National Security Decision Memorandum One. The Memorandum reorganized the National Security Council System. The effects

of the reorganization affected U.S. crisis response throughout the life of the administration. (V. p.80)

The Nixon structure relocated the power for decision-making. Created by Henry Kissinger and Morton Halperin (a Harvard colleague of Kissinger), the National Security Council became "the place in the government where the military and diplomatic resources studied and continually appraised problems." (V. p.81) Under Johnson, critical decisions were a part of *tuesday lunches*. Poorly recorded, taskings and decisions were often unclear. The consequences of the haphazard communications became very evident during the *Pueblo* crisis. The Halprin - Kissinger structure got rid of the Johnson informal style, and reestablished the NSC as the chief forum for decision-making. (V. p.81) In part, this pension for reorganization is Nixon's reaction to Kennedy's first crisis. Advising Kennedy after the *Bay of Pigs*, Nixon stated, "*I would find proper legal cover and I would go in.*" (W. p.333).

Nixon revitalized the NSC and its "crisis management" role. The membership included: the President, Vice-President, Secretaries of Defense and State, plus the Office of Emergency Preparedness, and as advisors, the Director of the CIA and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In addition, Nixon approved a filter, called the Review Group, for all issues destined for the NSC. Under Kissinger, the Review Group, which included the CIA Director, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, and the Under Secretary of State, determined what issues merited the full Councils review. As a result, full NSC meetings occurred infrequently, and only when absolutely necessary. (V. p.81) President Nixon expanded the NSC's former myopic focus on "operations," prevalent under President Johnson, to include long range planning, for

which the NSC had been designed (under Truman). (H. p.200) Additionally, Nixon instituted the concept of ad hoc working groups to review areas as required.

To document compliance, the administration developed two series of memorandum: National Security Study Memorandum and National Security Decision Memorandum. The purpose of the memorandums insured agencies clearly understood the Presidents reasons for action, and the directions to be taken. To insure compliance, the Under Secretaries Committee monitored implementation of approved actions, with Kissinger the most important member. (V. p.82)

By the end of his administration, Nixon increasingly depended on Kissinger rather than the NSC. Kissinger relates, *"The fact remains the NSC machinery was used more fully before my authority was confirmed, while afterward tactical decisions were increasingly taken outside the system in personal conversations with the President."* (S. p.48) Many consider the end of the Vietnam War a Nixon credit, but his personal loss of the Presidency, I contend, maybe forewarned in Kissinger's own words of relying on decisions *"outside the system"*...rather than the comfort of a tested crisis management system successfully instituted as a result of his administration's first crisis.

### **Carter - Reagan Transition**

***"Surround yourself with the best people you can find, delegate authority, and don't interfere as long as the policy you've decided upon is being carried out."***

**Ronald Reagan**

Ronald Reagan appointed an elaborate transition team to create a major bureaucracy. In April 1980, President Reagan began to plan for the beginning of a new



administration in the foreign and national policy area. His philosophy was *it takes a bureaucracy to run a bureaucracy*. (LL. p.142-43)

This was not a smooth transition. In fact, in Defense and State, for example, the newly designated Secretary came in and said in effect: "Thanks for all your work. Now go away, and I will run the department." This not only created mistrust but resentment throughout the executive department.(F). This mistrust by the Reagan team, of the entrenched bureaucrats, lead to a perceived crisis management inability of all incumbent government employees.

But our nation was in a "national crisis." In spite of all President Carter's efforts, the Iranians continued to hold American hostages. An aborted hostage attempt left a sour taste in the voter's mouth. Reagan decided to leave his mark and bring the hostages home.

An initial reaction, by the new Reagan administration, was to change the NSC. For starters, management of the National Security Council rested now with the Counselor to the President. This eliminated the cabinet rank enjoyed under Carter. A subsequent directive, from the President, placed the Vice President in charge of crisis management. This is not surprising, considering Mr. Bush's government experience (especially at the CIA). (LL. p.205-08)

Where President Carter sought to reduce the presumed dominance of the National Security Council over State and Defense, the Reagan Presidency stood committed to a fundamental restructuring of the entire National Security Council and staff. President Reagan believed the National Security Council should not serve as a decision-making body. Its role was facilitator among agencies of the government. (LL. p.143)

During the *Hostage Crisis*, the Carter Team isolated the crisis, and for them, all that remained was to manage it. Carter met regularly with his advisors and his crisis management team. The team made decisions, but after a night of further reflection, Carter would announce he changed his mind. This resulted in uncertainties, and doubt, among the crisis response team, and ultimately little got done. Carter's initial proactive response (the rescue attempt) followed by nine months of perceived inactivity, led to questions, by the American voters, of the President's crisis management ability. (DD. p.85)

The large transition team of Reagan appeared to achieve results. The Hostages came home, and this immediate "crisis success," I contend, set a positive tone for the next three years. The responsiveness (I call consciousness) can be summed up by General Colin Powell's reflections on being Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs: *"I take very seriously the traditional view of the responsibility of the Security Advisor and National Security Staff, namely that our job in the first instant is to ensure the integrity and running of the interagency process. Now, the interagency process works in many different ways. It includes supporting subcommittees that bring the departments and agencies together at the working level; it can mean more formal ways of ensuring consultation coordination, deliberation, and advice to the President. But it means in any event, that in an important sense, a National Security Advisor and the National Security staff are accountable to all senior members of the National Security Council...in short to give him (the President) the very special support and preparation he needs to make sound decisions and maintain his control of the process."* (JJ. p.206) These words from a seasoned warrior...on the battlefield and downtown Washington DC.

Reagan created a modified version of the *Cabinet Office*. The Cabinet provided advice on policy decisions, and the White House staff provided policy development. The

White House staff became the focus for broad direction in policy direction, and facilitated the coordination on interdepartmental issues. Although the White House staff served major policy development roles in past administrations, Reagan made them *partners* with Cabinet officers. (JJ. p.143)

While Carter and Nixon had weak personal relationships with Cabinet officers, Reagan chose officers with clear understanding of the policy direction he intended to take. In addition, Reagan insured all sub-Cabinet appointees understood his direction. Additionally, he constantly provided the Cabinet direction in policy matters. Cabinet officers believed they personally contributed to the administrations major policy decisions. However, individually, Cabinet officers could do little to move policy away from the broad ideological goals of the President. (JJ. p.142-43)

The potential success of the Reagan Cabinet model, a sense of camaraderie and solidarity, coupled with self importance, also contributed to a downside found in the Iran-Contra affair. Executive Order No. 12575, 1 December, 1986, created a special review board to "*conduct a comprehensive review of the future roles and procedures of the National Security Council (NSC) staff in the development, coordination, oversight, and conduct of foreign and national security policy; review the NSC staff's proper role in operational activities, especially extremely sensitive diplomatic, military, and intelligence missions.*" (JJ. p.207)

The Board, headed by the former Senator John Tower, recommended no substantive changes, regarding structure and organization, in the National Security Act of 1947. The Board concluded the Act's strength of **organizational flexibility** allowed Presidents to **adopt their own management styles**. **Rigid statutory specifications** were

not an answer. The failure in the system, which resulted in the Iran-Contra affair, was human and not from structural design. (JJ. p.207-8)

In conclusion, the National Security Council, designed under Reagan, insured policy coordination, and assured effectively implemented Presidential decisions. The Hostages came home, but the Iran-Contra affair highlights a good system's human weakness.

### What is History Teaching Us?

*"Many receive advice, few profit by it."*  
Publius Syrus  
*Moral Sayings, circa first century B.C.*

James P. Pfiffner, Professor of Public Affairs, George Mason University, wrote, *"In order for a new president to take office and get effective control of the government, several components of an effective transition must be planned: personnel recruitment, congressional liaison, and transition teams in the executive branch. If the president-elect is to be ready, planning must begin before the election."* (H. p.1-18). Despite the volume of literature, Presidents generally have very little choice on how to initially organize their staff. Their choices revolve around: a limited set of historical examples, the relative successes and failures of past presidents, their personal policy goals, and their personal management style.

How a President puts the new team together, and organizes his staff...especially a "crisis" staff ...changed in new dimension with the creation of the NSC (in 1947). Presidents face three basic alternatives in organizing the key appointed members of his

team. The first choice is along a hierarchical chain of command, very formal, such as used by Eisenhower and Nixon. The second choice is a competitive arrangement of staffs constantly vying for a position with the President (Kennedy and Johnson). Finally, a third choice is the collegial model, used by the Carter administration. Like the spoke of a wheel, this organizational model is a variation of the first two choices, although it is closer in spirit to the competitive arrangement. This organization organizes around senior aides to the President, with specific duties and responsibilities, while retaining a substantial degree of competitiveness between the rest of the Executive Department in resolving key political and policy issues. (N. p.82-7)

Burned by a failed "crisis," Kennedy chose to rely heavily on his White House staff, and temporary task forces, for policy development, and depend less and less on the professionals of the Executive Department. Nixon expanded the control of the White House. Possibly out of personal need, but, I contend, more out of insuring personal control over the "crisis management" system. Nixon never wanted to be out of control. Where Carter tried to return to a less centralized Presidency, the *Iranian Hostage Crisis* focused the Reagan administration on a large personal staff controlling everything.

In reviewing the three transitions, I found some common threads emerging. Each new administration sought a workable crisis management system flexible to meet the new President's style of management, but different from the outgoing President. In fact, there is significant effort to be different. Generally, however, in each new administration the systems designed had some basic similarities:

1. First, the new system provided the President a means to address crisis pressures and problems (foreign and domestic). For Kennedy it meant recognizing the importance of effective supervision and coordination in a crisis. Nixon

strengthened the NSC and its long range planning, and Reagan supported an interagency process.

2. The staff needed to recommend well thought out solutions. An increasingly dangerous world requires a new president to perform "crisis management" on day one. Therefore, the new administration learned to understand and appreciate the limits of crisis management. Kennedy lacked trust and had to build it. Nixon vowed to change the loose style of communications at the NSC level. Reagan assured effective implementation of Presidential decisions. Bottom line: each new administration sought to introduce measures improving staff solutions and reducing the risk that tensions will escalate into warfare.
3. A common thread, throughout the transitions examined, is no training for the new team before taking office. The frustration of lack of training before taking office is articulated in the words of General Maxwell Taylor: *"Here was this vast machinery of government and they (the new administration) didn't know how it ran, where you put in the gas, where you put in the oil, where you turn the throttle. And like all other administrations, they'd gone to great pains to throw out the old rascals so they could let the new rascals get in and bring utopia of some sort."* It's too late to learn, or plan for, "how" a new President (and his team) is going to conduct crisis management after the crisis starts. However, the transitions examined revealed crisis training happened *during a crisis*. Clearly, if training and organizational structures are to be effective, it must start upon election ...before the inaugural.
4. Finally, there must be effective information flow. Kennedy found that lack of communications was a primary administration failure during the *Bay of Pigs* incident. Nixon wanted to overcome the Johnson administration's characteristically lacks communications. And Reagan sought to remedy Carter's

perceived indecisiveness. Ironically, information is never perfect. The President must establish, quickly, a mechanism to sift through large amounts of information, bubbling up various recommendations for consideration, and all based on the best information possible.

Therefore, history teaches crisis management presents a new President with a greater need, more than ever, to act rationally. Unfortunately, a crisis puts multiple pressures on the leader. However, as revealed in the Tower Report, our past President's failures are not totally the fault of structure, but more a result from human errors. The resulting "fog" of the situation often makes the elusive goal of rational decision-making even more difficult. History dictates change will occur with each new administration...it's their mandate. The trick is ensuring human tools for crisis management get introduced early in a new administration. The tools should not inhibit, but assist in, concluding a crisis in the best national interests.

### **Recommendations**

For a new President, a crisis is an event that occurs suddenly and heightens tensions. It appears where stakes are high, where there is little time to decide and act, and where decision-makers are under intense pressure. The atmosphere is one of uncertainty and contains expectations of hostile action.

In a crisis, tradition calls for the president to step to the forefront and assume command. As the principal actor in the foreign policy process, the President, during a crisis, is granted and assumes wide prerogative powers. Although not the only actor, the

separation of powers (between the President and Congress) results in "crisis inefficiency," and therefore leads the nation to turn to the President, potentially creating a "constitutional dictator." (K. p.300-1)

Whatever label one cares to place upon a President in a crisis, it is clear that during crises, the public, courts, and Congress generally look to the Chief Executive to assume control. As A. Klieman writes in Preparing for the Hour of Need: Emergency Powers in the United States,<sup>3</sup>: "In an emergency, with the nation's fate possibly at stake, power will flow to the President. Nationally, peril creates the political and psychological conditions for the use of power by a determined, confident President. Emergencies evoke a psychological need for authority. They also present a need within government for centralized leadership and decisive action."

In addition, there is a recognition that all crises are threatening, but all crises don't have the same potential. For example, there is a fundamental difference between a non-nuclear crisis, such as the *Iranian Hostage* situation, and a potentially nuclear crisis, such as the *Pueblo* or *Cuban Missile* crisis. A non-nuclear crisis threatens the national interest; whereas, a nuclear crisis threatens world survival. (N. p.81-97)

One author, Phil Williams<sup>4</sup>, adds another component to the definition of crisis management, writing, "Crisis management is concerned, on the one hand, with the procedures for controlling and regulating a crisis so that it does not get out of hand and lead to war, and on the other hand, with ensuring that the crisis is resolved on a satisfactory basis in which the vital interest of the state are secured and protected. The

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<sup>3</sup>Taken from the *Presidential Quarterly*, Summer 1979.

<sup>4</sup>Phil Williams, "Crisis Management", *Contemporary Strategy*. New York, 1975, p.157



second aspect will almost invariably necessitate vigorous actions carrying substantial risks. One task of crisis management, therefore, is to temper these risks, to keep them as low and as controllable as possible in gaining concessions from the adversary and maintaining one's own position relatively intact." (N. p.83-4)

The successful end result of a crisis (short of war) is the third component of crisis management. This raises the issue of preparation... how does one educate/train leaders, before a crisis, to meet the demands of a crisis, increasing the likelihood that the crisis will be resolved short of war?

A senior member of the NSC in the Carter administration commented on his first crisis noting that, *"most staggering thing was walking into the White House during our first major crisis, wondering what to do, and then all of a sudden realizing that there are no rules, no books, and no procedures. One of your first thoughts is to ask the President, but the President doesn't know, he only knows what the staff tells him."* (N. p.84)

The efforts to bring top officials of the administration into a more formalized training program remain limited. The lack of explicit pre-crisis training seems surprising considering the importance of, and considerable research, on crisis decision-making. After all, if a wrong move is made, leaders may not get a second chance to correct their mistakes. And yet, a new administration appears quite willing to risk having the new President face the pressures of crisis decision-making with little preparation.

While most definitions of crisis management concentrate on crisis response, it is also important to consider those steps taken before the outbreak of a crisis. In addition,

consideration must be given to the leaders' abilities to deal with the demands faced during the active management of a crisis.

Therefore, I recommend a set of "principles for crisis management" (see Figure 1).

**Principles  
for  
Crisis Management**

- vigilance
- education and training
- responsible
- bureaucratic buster
- efficient
- congressional awareness
- knowledge

Figure 1

These are principles for consideration before a crisis. These principles provide a simple guide for the President to collectively organize the crisis management machinery, still allowing for his unique administrations' mandate, but giving the new team capabilities to effectively deal with national and international situations. The principles represent an institutionalized approach to develop a better prepared incoming President, and top appointed officials, capable of

facing the varied demands of a crisis.

- ***Vigilance.*** You cannot manage a crisis unless you know you have one. A successful Presidential team alerts to discover and avoid danger. Extremely keen, the new team stresses readiness and promptness to capture opportunities and defeat danger. Kennedy learned to balance expert advice with counsel from well-trusted aides. *Balance* is the key! People around the President, whom he knows and trusts, must also know who makes things go in the government bureaucracy. The combination of mutual respect between the new administration and the established government professional can increase the likelihood of early crisis detection. (*Lesson from the Eisenhower - Kennedy Transition*)
- ***Education and crisis training.*** In building a balanced staff, an important step is to institute education and training for the President, and his top senior executives, in International and National crisis management. Somehow we must work through the inherent mistrust new administrations have for anything institutionalized, and provide training that is productive, and administration enhancing, regardless of agenda. The

military constantly exercises...getting beyond its ten missions...ensuring a capable force able to meet any situation. I suggest the President, and his team, needs just as rigorous a training period as any new Air Force wing commander. Various scenarios, such as the ones discussed in this report, could provide the basis for review, along with discussions centered on developing the interpersonal skills to successfully manage a crisis. The training starts before the President takes office, and thereafter, scheduled on a regular basis. Not only would this serve to educate the President, but this type training develops the inter-agency skills of the career professionals, giving the President added confidence that his staff will carry out his orders. To diffuse the mistrust between the new and established government workers, education and training outside the NSC structure is an option. An alternative is the National Defense University (NDU). Chartered to prepare senior government leaders with the tools to deal with national power, NDU would be the level playing field for disseminating lessons learned, and new ideas for, crisis detection and management. Its design, as an institute of higher learning, offers an atmosphere for exchanging ideas rather than trying to overcome inertia or a specific government department agenda. (*Lesson from the Eisenhower - Kennedy and Carter - Reagan Transitions*)

- This leads to an educated, trained staff, **Responsible for**, and capable of, direct communications within and outside the government. In times of crisis there is a tendency not to communicate...for example Kennedy's dilemma. A trained and responsible staff makes a conscious effort to deal with communication shutdowns before the crisis makes such steps impossible. (*Lesson from the Eisenhower - Kennedy, and Carter - Regain Transition*)
- To be able to react quickly, and thereby focus the resources of the government, there should be a single crisis control center...capable of **Bureaucratic Busting**. This does not mean destroying successful bureaucratic institutions. The transition crisis

management training and education should prevent this. With representatives from throughout the Executive Department and with a nucleus from State and DOD personnel (based on current legislated NSC membership requirements), the center (a part of the NSC) would monitor possible crisis situations and provide the initial "startup" response for the President as a situation develops. I suggest that by closing the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and redistributing its personnel assets, you could have the needed authorizations to produce the center. Before a crisis, the center would exchange information with various governments and international agencies, conduct problem solving exercises and educate and train its personnel. During a crisis, the center would focus the implementation of actions directed by the President and NSC...cutting the bureaucratic "red tape." In addition, the new center should be active with both precrisis management (advising and consulting with NDU) and with its crisis activities. It would be different from other existing interagency groups by both education and structure. The center's personnel would be crisis management trained and composed of new administration and permanent government employees. Working directly for the office of the President, they serve to facilitate, not mandate, different department agenda's. (*Lesson from Eisenhower - Kennedy Transition*)

- *Efficiency* is a product gained by well thought out established crisis procedures resulting from training and education. No more "going at it on a wing and a prayer." Explicit, agreed upon ground rules for crisis behavior can take some of the uncertainty out of the initial build up of a crisis. Defined boundaries assist the staffs in implementing the various options developed to deal with the amount of uncertainty found in any crisis. In addition, pre-planned procedures tend to slow down the action, allowing time to clearly think through the alternatives. (*Lesson Learned in all Transitions examined*)

- The training and education in crisis management are not only a Presidential issue, but an issue of *Congressional Awareness*. Keeping Congress informed of a crisis, and a planned U.S. response, is critical in bringing the crisis to successful conclusion. The constitutional and statutory limits on what the President could do without going to Congress, challenges the exercise of Presidential power and shapes decision-making from the onset of a crisis. Although there are occasions when the President and his key advisors wish for greater control, clearly, conferring on the President more sweeping emergency powers would involve congressionally unacceptable changes in our constitutional system. I'm not advocating seating Congress in the NSC. However, Congress would receive periodic education and complimentary training, providing them some foundation before a crisis begins. (*Lesson Learned as a general observation of all Transitions evaluated*)
- **Knowledge** is an understanding gained by actual experience. The principles, as outlined, provide the President and his staff the capability of obtaining experience without the potential of war and loss of life. Just as important as fighter pilot training to get the first 10 missions before called upon to do actual battle, crisis management training and education serve to gain actual experience for the President and his staff before faced with dealing with actual crisis activities.

Finally, what's changed to implore us to make changes...adopting the proposed principles for our new President and his team. I suggest three changes. First, we are in an information age. Immediate review, and critique, of any actions made by the President, receives instantaneous world-wide attention. Consequences of an ill timed, poorly trained, and mismanaged crisis response, embarrasses the nation. In addition, because of the "CNN capabilities," public faith in the President can quickly diminish. Second, we are the sole remaining super power. With super power status come responsibilities, whether we

like it or not. Our new President needs to confront the nuances of crisis management before steering the ship of state. Finally, the complexities of the Federal government are growing, not diminishing. Education and training will serve to enhance the President in getting the most out of all the government workers.

As further evidence, the General Accounting Office (GAO) report, **"DISASTER MANAGEMENT, Recent Disaster Demonstrate the Need to Improve the Nation's Response Strategy,"** concluded: "...our nation is not prepared for catastrophic disasters and does not respond rapidly and effectively when such disasters occur." Although an outgrowth of a Congressional review of the Hurricane Andrew Federal response, this report highlighted a "...a broader look at overall federal policy and organizational structure" to deal with crises.

Although I narrowed my analysis to Presidential transitions with international crises, the conclusions of the GAO report support the suggested recommendations. Specifically, "the presence of Presidential leadership creates a powerful, meaningful perception in the Federal government; that the government recognizes this event is catastrophic, and that the Federal government is in control and is going to use every means necessary to meet the immediate mass care needs of disaster victims."

*Vigilance* corrects perceptions, and provides for early detection, and recognition, of a crisis before it happens. *Education and training* insure the new President knows how to control, and what to use in confronting the crisis. Finally, a well-trained *crisis response team*, from across the government, demonstrates a government in control, not pointing fingers, but marshaling the necessary resources to bring the crisis to an end.

## **Conclusion and Observations**

The reaction of a new Presidential administration to its first crisis forms the foundation for future crisis management decisions. With a new President, and team, especially from the incumbent's opposition party, there is a tendency to do things differently. Today, no formal mechanism exists to train new Presidential team members. Therefore, the first crisis becomes a proving ground for the strategy and policies of the new administration. The risk is our country's future. However, greater familiarity with past transitions can improve a new President's crisis management abilities. Specifically, I've outlined some basic principles to improve a new President's crisis response.

President Clinton inherited major international crises in the making...Somalia, Bosnia. Very few key appointments, lack of trained staff, and a perceived mistrust between the President's staff and the career civil servants (including the military), could impact our nation's ability to react in a crisis. For example, the Federal response to the Branch Davidian siege in Waco, Texas, provides some insight into the Clinton team's crisis response abilities.

In the aftermath of the FBI's tear gas response to end the 51 day siege, and ultimate fiery end of the cult and deaths of 80 people, White House staff members floated various stories of who was in charge. The Washington Post first reported White House statements that responsibility for federal actions rested with the Attorney General. This changed the next day, apparently after strong public and congressional concerns, in a Presidential news conference where Clinton stated *he* ultimately was in charge. The resulting confusion has lead to pending congressional hearings to answer some questions

such as: Who was in charge? Were all possible outcomes anticipated? Do we have the practical knowledge, at the top, to handle such crises?<sup>5</sup>

President Clinton is clearly in charge. However, there are steps, if taken now, that will improve the response of the entire Federal government to meet President Clinton's, and his team of advisors, crisis management directions. The mere fact questions are rising about the Administration's crisis management competency, resulting from the Waco, Texas, disaster, sends a loud and clear signal to the President. He cannot afford to ignore lessons of past transitions, and should institute policies, now, to enhance the nation's crisis management capabilities.

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<sup>5</sup>Summarized from editorials and commentary from the Washington Post, 19-23 April 1993.



## **NOTES**

1. In 1943, Army Chief of Staff Marshall broke with Army tradition and proposed to the Joint Chiefs a "Single Department of War in the Post-War Period." The proposal called for ground, sea and air components, and a separate service of supply. Each division would be under a civilian with a military chief of staff. At the top of the whole structure would be a "chief of the staff to the President," who, with the other military chiefs, would form a joint general staff. (T. p.39) The Navy opposed, seeking looser control, and leaving each service considerably autonomous.

While Marshall's recommendations aired in Congress, the Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal, enlisted the help of his friend, Ferdinand Eberstadt, former chairman of the Army-Navy Munitions Board, to draft an alternative proposal. Eberstadt recommended three service departments - war, navy, and air - not coordinated by a secretary of defense but by committees. In addition, a body called the Joint Chiefs of Staff, created by executive order, would emphasize coordination and cooperation rather than unification and merger. In addition, Eberstadt believed the new structure needed a mechanism to bridge the gap between foreign and military policy. He proposed three new organizations: a National Security Council, chaired by the President; a Central Intelligence Agency, and a National Security Resources Board to plan for industrial mobilization. (T. p.140)

Although Truman felt unification was of practical necessity, he did not strongly favor any particular plan. However, his strong admiration for Marshall led him to favor the General's plan. This led to a December 1945 message to recommend a single Department of National Defense with war, navy and air on equal footing. He recommended a single Secretary of Defense (cabinet officer), a uniformed Chief of Staff of the Department of Defense and three service chiefs. This entire group of officials would form a presidential advisory body to the president. (T. p.140)

Trying to achieve legislation was an exhausting task for Truman, but it resulted in the introduction of legislation embodying Truman's proposals in the spring of 1946. Although insisting on a single Department of Defense, Truman relented to the Navy's objection to a Chief of Staff. However fundamental differences remained and Truman deferred legislation till 1947. In a final compromise, the legislation called for an autonomous army, navy, and air force; a new secretary of defense with no general or specific responsibilities over the separate services and the adoption of Eberstadt's plan of a National Security Council and Central Intelligence Agency. The bill passed (July 25, 1947) did not in fact create Truman's Department of Defense, but with a secretary presiding over a nebulous body called the National Military Establishment. New legislation passed in 1949 finally created the Department of Defense proposed by Truman. (T. p.310)

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